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**SPECULATION ON THE CLEARANCE OF THE MOSCOW DOCTORS**

The 4 April statement by the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) clearing the Soviet doctors who were implicated last January in a murder conspiracy, differentiates more than ever between Malenkov's and Stalin's regimes. This trend has previously been marked by the recent Party and governmental reorganizations, the amnesty decree, the price cuts which were slightly larger than those last year, and a general, if subtle, deemphasis of Stalin since his death.

The action with respect to the doctors viewed in conjunction with the USSR's recent conciliatory gestures throughout the world indicates that the Kremlin feels the need to smooth tensions both inside the orbit and internationally for the time being.

It is significant that the MVD reorganization has resulted in the loss of the large and important MVD economic directorates to the pertinent economic ministries, and the Chief Administration of Labor Camps was transferred to the Ministry of Justice. Apparently the MVD's main functions will be restricted to police matters.

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There is no firm evidence at present on which to base the existence of an internal struggle for power, or on the relationship of the recent developments to such a struggle. There are, however, bits of evidence and suggestive events which lead to various speculations:

1. The clearing of the doctors represents a move by at least Malenkov and Beriya, if not an agreement of all the top leaders. This agreement stems from a desire to popularize the regime and is in line with the current "peace campaign." In line with this "joint" interpretation there are several possibilities:
  - (a) The doctor's conspiracy was at least indirectly a move against Beriya made with Stalin's, but not Malenkov's connivance, since Beriya is reportedly a close friend and supporter of Malenkov. In this maneuver Stalin had the help of his personal Secretary Poskrebyshev. The latter was inexplicably absent from all of Stalin's funeral proceedings. Stalin, old and nervous about his health, was readily amenable when information on the doctors' plot was passed to him.
  - (b) The doctors' conspiracy was an army maneuver with Stalin's blessings against Beriya and possibly others. In this connection the two individuals, Shcherbakov and Zhdanov, who were purportedly assassinated, had strong army ties, and the individuals whom the doctors were currently "maltreating" were army men.
2. Beriya cleared the doctors in a move against Malenkov in reaction to the MVD's loss of powers, and in order to popularize himself with the Soviet people. The doctors were apprehended when Ignatiev, a Malenkov man, was head of the MGB, and the conspiracy thus represented a move by Malenkov to eventually implicate Beriya. While Ignatiev has currently moved out of the MGB to become a member of the five man Party Secretariat, his future disposition may provide a clue as to veracity of this explanation.

3. Clearing the doctors was a Malenkov move against Beriya. Malenkov was already stripping Beriya's powers. Malenkov now accuses the investigating section of the former MGB, now in the MVD, of breaking the Soviet law thereby warning Beriya that he, Malenkov, will alone interpret what practices are permissible even in police affairs.
4. The apparent reversal of all of Stalin's policies and schemes of Party and government organization indicates that his lieutenants were not in agreement with him. Alarmed at the growing tension caused by Stalin's adventures and his equivocation on backing up the peace campaign with conciliatory gestures, his lieutenants removed the Kremlin doctors, replaced the top physician with a MGB man, and did away with Stalin.

Whatever the facts behind the doctor's conspiracy, the present development is likely to have repercussions in the Communist hierarchies of the Satellites, particularly with regard to engineers of the Satellite vigilance campaigns, such as that directed against Slansky in Czechoslovakia.